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Cameras target drivers who pass school buses; program to expand



By John Aaron (<http://wtop.com/author/john-aaron/>) | [@JohnAaronWTOP](https://twitter.com/JohnAaronWTOP)
(<https://twitter.com/JohnAaronWTOP>)

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A Montgomery County Public Schools bus is seen here, with the camera that records cars passing it. (WTOP.Mike Murillo)

ROCKVILLE, Md. — The start of school in Montgomery County could mean more traffic tickets for drivers who pass stopped school buses.

When classes begin in Montgomery County on Monday, Aug. 29, about 25 school buses will be equipped with cameras to record drivers who illegally pass them, a continuation of the the pilot program started in 2014. But that number is about to go up.

If a school bus camera records you passing a stopped school bus, it's a \$125 fine, which may sound stiff, but it could be worse. "You pass a school bus and the cop catches you, it's \$570 and three points," said Montgomery County police Capt. Tom Didone.

Didone said the camera program will expand to more than 100 buses within the first two weeks of school. He said that all of the school system's buses, about 1,200, will have the cameras within three years.

Didone said drivers can legally pass a stopped school bus if they're coming the other way, and a median separates the opposing lanes. But drivers must stop if it's only paint that separates the lanes, even on wide and busy roads.

Didone says more than 4,800 violations have been recorded since the camera program started.

"Those numbers were alarming, and it's only a matter of time before we get a kid injured, and we've got to do everything we can to prevent that," he said.

He said future school buses will be equipped with multiple cameras that record the inside of the bus.

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